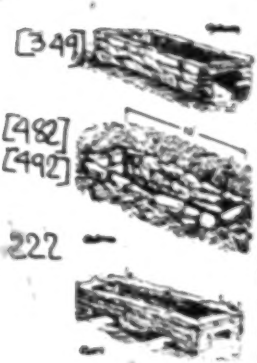
9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Fig. 100
Total length 50"

as of other branches of the sciences of humanity that we know more of the ways of remote peoples of the world that we do of our own folk (Figs. 97 and 98, and Plate VI).

Before leaving the sea and coming back to shore, brief reference must be made to some other sea-creatures which have contributed to the economy of the coasts. There is the basking shark of the Aran Islands pursued in curraghs and captured with a harpoon of the type shown in Figure 100. Seals, despite the many superstitions attaching to them, have been hunted for their skins; according to an old account the skins were made into covers for the oval curraghs of the Rosses in Donegal. It is recorded that seal-catchers in Co. Cork wore on their arms "bags quilted with charcoal." The seals when they bite are said to let go the hold when they hear the crunch of the charcoal.

Shore-collecting plays a varied if nowadays greatly reduced part in the life of coastal communities. The great days of kelp-burning, when the strong dense smoke drifted far inland, are no more, but this once flourishing industry has left its traces in half-ruined kelp-kilns (Fig. 101) and in various rusting hooks and drags (102, 103) which betray the keen rivalry shown in gathering the crop. The best weeds (tangle or "fyams," that is, *Laminaria*) were cut in deep water and their value was enhanced if they were free of sand. The men would sometimes have their knives and sickles fitted with handles as much as twenty feet long: women and children with back creels, assisted by donkeys or ponies with side-creels, did the carrying. In Aran the creel women protect their backs from the damp seaweed by wearing a goatskin.



Kelp Kilns
Fig. 101.

Carting or "drawing" the wrack for manuring the fields is still an active industry in spring on most Irish shores. The wrack is often carried some miles inland, and there are many stories of the contraband goods once smuggled from the coast under cover of loads of piled wrack. In Carlingford Lough, where the tides run high, wide stretches of foreshore are "planted" with rows of boulders in orderly fields called "plans." The bladderwrack which grows on the stones is

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
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Inishbofin

but a few years ago the ordinary means of lighting the houses was a rude open lamp, filled with oil extracted from the livers of fish, and having a piece of peeled rush for a wick. 373

Kelp-burning was formerly one of the industries of the islands, but of late years it declined rapidly, and is now practically extinct. As to the cause of this decay of a formerly profitable source of income, very different accounts are given, some alleging the poor quality of the weed; others that they were not fairly treated in selling; and others again that it does not pay as well as the fish-curing. 381

The fish most taken are sea-bream, glassan (a sort of pollock), mackerel, turbot, and plaice, used mostly for home consumption; cod and ling, which are cured at the fish-curing station for exportation, and oil extracted from their livers; also large quantities of crabs and lobsters, which are taken to Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare, from which they are forwarded to the English market. The boat used for conveying them is of peculiar construction, and has a large salt-water tank amidships, in which the lobsters are kept alive. The lobster-pots are of the usual type. There is nothing unusual about their ordinary method of fishing, except that the Inishbofin men, as mentioned in a footnote to the account of that island in the Memoir of the Geological Survey, already alluded to, do not follow the shoals of fish around the western headland, but carry their boats across the narrow isthmus in which Lough Bofin is situated. 226 439 [501] [502]

The pursuit of the "sun-fish," or basking-shark (*Selache maxima*), was formerly a source of considerable profit to the islanders, but has been almost altogether abandoned of late years owing to the decline in the price of the oil, and partly, it is said, to the loss of several lives on one occasion when a boat was charged and overturned by a wounded fish, also to the partial disappearance for some years of the sharks. 226

The season for this enterprise is from April until the end of June, and in that time large numbers of these fish were taken formerly, and some are still killed from time to time. Mr. G. H. Kinahan, to whom I am indebted for several notes relative to the condition of the islands some years ago, says:—"The sun-fish fishing was considerable in my time (1870). I have seen strings of seven and nine fish; when caught, they towed them into the harbour, cut out the liver, and left the carcass to rot, or be eaten by the pigs; the stench in the harbour was something to remember." A very full description of the fishing is given by Sir H. W. Gore-Booth in a recent article. He states that the value of the oil (from eight to twelve petroleum barrels full) obtained from the liver of one of these fish has been variously estimated

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

241 The manures used are mainly sea-weed and farmyard manure. In the mountains the practice of burning the land is common.

231 The pasture is fairly good, but the cattle and sheep are inferior, though efforts are now being made to improve the breeds.

An average family has a couple of pigs, a cow or two and some sheep, a large number of fowl, geese and ducks, and a donkey or horse.

372 The fuel used is turf obtained from the bogs, which are extensive, except in the southern part of the Mullet; and the islands which have now no turf of their own import from Achill or Ballycroy.

● 381 A very considerable quantity of kelp is made, on which, in the Mullet, a royalty is charged by the landlord. About Portacloy there is no royalty paid.

226 Fishing employs many of the men, though until lately the fish taken was merely for home use. The kinds usually caught are turbot, mackerel, ling, cod, and herrings; all of these, except the turbot, are now cured at the fishing stations established at several parts of the coast by the government. For home consumption, much [251] is eaten fresh, but a good deal of it is roughly salted for winter use.

Lobsters are mostly taken by the men of Inishkea, and by a couple of boats at Portacloy. The Inishkea men, while at this [342] fishing, mostly live in very primitive huts on Inisglora, where they stay away from their families for six weeks or two months at a time. [435] The lobsters are sold in Belmullet for about five shillings per dozen, and are sent by car to Ballina and thence to England. The lobster pots are mostly of home manufacture.

The fishery stations mentioned above now afford employment to many who formerly had no means of disposing of their surplus time and fish.

439 Large quantities of eggs are exported from this district, Belmullet being the largest egg exporting centre in Ireland. They are brought 235 into the town by the country people and sold to dealers, who, when they have collected a sufficient quantity, send them on to Ballina, whence they are sent to England. Butter is also exported in the [234] summer and autumn.

273 Illicit distilling is carried on to some extent in this district, though not at all so prevalent as formerly. The stills are made in the people's homes by travelling tinkers who live with the family until the job is finished.

286 A good deal of homespun is made, but the dyes are not obtained

228 to collect one stone in an hour. Kelp
[381] (seaweed) burning for iodine on the beaches was almost extinct by 1894.[17]

Settlement and Population

361 Of the 96 houses counted as inhabited, 53 are in five hamlets and another six in a loose cluster near the harbor. There is no village as the term is commonly understood, though the main center is beside the harbor, where the inn occupies the one-time "big house" of the Allies family, with the church and the Post Office a short distance away. In
[444] all there are eight shops, none of which is recognizable from the outside, as everyone knows them: one is attached to the inn, another to the Post Office, a third occupies a specially built room in a farmyard, and the rest are in front rooms of houses. All the houses except about six have land attached.

Is this nucleated settlement as such?
361 On the first Ordnance Survey map
178 (1838) there were large clusters of houses and on the 1898 map the vast majority
621 of the houses were in clusters. The redistribution of land and building of new houses has broken up many hamlets or made new ones, for example in Knock townland (405 acres) where an old hamlet on a sandy site has been replaced by a new one on drier ground by the shore, with 15 of the townland's 17 houses. In Cloonamore (663 acres)
361 eight houses are placed along the shore
621 and eleven others scattered over the hillside; in Middlequarter (608 acres) there are eleven houses in the main hamlet, six beside the harbor and eleven others at various points beside the shore or on side roads; in Fawnmore (199 acres) six houses out of sixteen are in a loosely defined hamlet; and in West-
361 quarter (523 acres) nine houses out of

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 349.

[p.208(A)]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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resting on a well-prepared bed of drawn straw spread on a hurdle, and he recalled the phrase 'soft as kiln bedding' to illustrate the care devoted to the operation. The Gaelic language has quite an extensive vocabulary describing every detail of the floor and the bedding of a corn-kiln. Because of the risk of fire, the Laws stipulated that the kiln must not be placed within so many paces of the dwelling house.

Lint-kilns, for drying flax after it had been taken from the retting dams, were in general use in Ulster in the days of hand-scutching, and a few half-ruined specimens are still in existence. As with corn-kilns—and lime-kilns—they were of two kinds, which may be termed pot-kilns and pipe-kilns. The former are described in Co. Armagh as 'small sod buildings, left open at the top . . . built by the sides of fences near the cabins: they are four or five feet in diameter, and have a hurdle of sticks placed across them at a convenient height (about four feet) on which a small quantity of flax is spread to dry over a turf fire'.[1] The stone-built kilns, known in Co. Tyrone as 'farrows' were similar in construction to the 'tobacco pipe' corn-kilns. The flax, well shaken and loose, was placed on end on a wattled platform set across the bowl of the pipe. When dried it was beaten on a melling-stone with a heavy wooden mell until every stalk was flattened and it then passed to the hand-scutcher.

As the corn-drying kiln has been superseded by the kiln attached to the country grist-mill, so the small lime-kiln has given way, over most of the country, to the large quarry-kiln. At the same time coal has replaced turf as a fuel. The little circular pot-kiln of sods or stones filled with alternate layers of turf and limestone may be met with in the west, but in general the home-burning of lime did not long survive the Great Famine. Down to that time, wherever limestone could be obtained, almost every farm or farm cluster had a lime-kiln. It was the importation of guano and later of artificial manure that put an end to a most advantageous practice. The application of lime to acid soils is a comparatively recent practice, but one likes to think that the little pot-kiln was in use long ago to burn lime or sea-shells for the whitewash with which the mud houses were lightened and brightened. Kelp-kilns, similarly (see Chapter

[1] I. Binns, *Miseries and Beauties* (1837), I, 178.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

343 XVI), had their great days in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but small-scale wrack-burning is far older than this. 381 In the later eighteenth century, when framed windows and brick chimneys became fashionable in the more prosperous [339] lowland farms, the bricks were locally burnt in circular kilns plastered with clay.

343 Another class of outbuilding, allied to the clochaun in construction, is the stone sweat-house, the Irish version of the ?57 Turkish bath, which the Germans, indeed, call the Irish bath. There is a theory that the idea reached Ireland with Christian missionaries who were accustomed to Roman practices, but heat-treatment as a cure is so widespread throughout the world (cf. the sweat-houses of Finland and pre-Columbian California) that one thinks of remoter origins. What is certain is that they were visited for cures within living memory in several parts of Ireland. In west Cavan twenty-five sweat-houses have been listed in one district, and many more are known to have been destroyed. A French traveller of the late eighteenth century observed that 'wherever there are four or five cabins near each other there is sure to be a sweating-house'.[1] And old people in Cavan confirm that every four or five families once shared a sweat-house, in which sweating cures were taken in summer and autumn (Fig. 37, 6).

The sweat-house is a dry-stone corbelled structure, measuring internally from four to seven feet in diameter and rather less in height. A low lintelled doorway is the only means of access though some specimens have a roughly constructed chimney flue to allow the smoke to escape. This was closed with sods during the treatment, as was the door. The fire of turf—straw and bracken seem also to have been used—had been kept burning inside for a day or two previously. The floor, normally an earthen floor though some examples were cobbled or paved, was then swept clean and strewn with green rushes. On these, or on grass sods or low stools which they took in with them, from two to as many as six or seven persons would sit, naked and sweating profusely. After half an hour or so they would emerge and cool themselves either in a near-by stream or with a bucket

[1]De Latocnaye, *A Frenchman's Walk through Ireland* (1796–97). Ed. J. Stevenson (1917), 198.